Review of SPG Security Cover Provided to Former Prime Ministers

*722. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA†:
SHRI SURESH PCHOURI:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have assessed from time to time the threat perceptions in respect of the former Prime Ministers and members of their families?

(b) if so, what are the details and outcome thereof;

(c) whether Government are contemplating to review the entire gamut of the SPG security cover provided to the former Prime Ministers and members of their families based on the assessment; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI S.B. CHAVAN): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Tabel of the House (see below)

Statement

(a) to (d) Assessment of threat perceived in the case of former Prime Ministers and their family members is an ongoing process. Disclosure of details of such assessment is not desirable on security considerations. Review of SPG cover provided to former Prime Ministers or members of their families, based on threat assessment, is not being contemplated at present.

श्री एस०एस० अहलुवालिया: सभापति महोदय, पूर्व प्रधान मंत्री एवं उनके परिवार के सदस्यों के मामले में एस०पी०जी० की सुरक्षा की समीक्षा के बारे में मैंने सवाल किया है। सुरक्षा की दृष्टि को मद्देनजर रखते हुए उसके मूल्यांकन का ब्यौरा सदन के सामने नहीं रखा जा सकता मैं इससे सहमत हूं। मैं आपके माध्यम से अपने गृह मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहता हूं कि विश्वनाथ प्रताप सिंह जी के बार बार इस सवाल के उठाए जाने के कारण कि फिजूलखर्ची के नाम पर एस०पी०जी० की सुरक्षा भूतपूर्व प्रधान मंत्री और उनके परिवार के सदस्यों की तरफ से विदड्रा कर ली जाए, इस चीज को मद्देनजर रखते हुए क्या सरकार ऐसा कुछ सोच रही है कि भूतपूर्व प्रधान मंत्री या उनके परिवार के सदस्य जब विदेश यात्रा में जाएंगे तो उन्हें एस०पी०जी० की सुरक्षा की व्यवस्था नहीं दी जाएगी? क्या इस पर कोई विचार सरकार कर रही है? अगर कर रही है तो क्या उन्होंने कभी इस चीज़ को मद्देनजर रखा है कि हमारे देश में जितने भी आतंकवादी संगठन है उनके प्रशिक्षण केन्द्र विदेशों में है और विदेशी सहायता से ही हमारे देश में आतंवादी घटनाएं घट रही हैं? तो अगर उन्हें विदेश में एस०पी०जी० कवर नहीं दिया जाएगा तो क्या हम उन्हें सुरक्षित रख सकेंगे? इन चीजों पर क्या विचार किया गया है या नहीं, यह मैं जानना चाहता हूं?

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN: There are two aspects of the question which the hon. member has raised. One is about the letter which the former Prime Minister, Mr. V.P. Singh, has written to the Prime Minister, saying that the SPG cover is a very expensive proposition and he would like to see that some alternative arrangement is made by which the expenditure could be reduced and if the Government cannot do that, then, he would rather go without security. Ultimately, these are matters which are not depending upon the kind of expenditure which is involved. It is the threat perception which ultimately decides as to what kind of security needs to be provided. Under the S.P.G. Act, for five years after demitting office, former Prime Ministers, are eligible for getting the kind of security cover available from the SPG. But if they are not prepared to have the SPG cover, if they decline to have the same, we will have to go into the details and find out from them as to what exactly they have in mind. I cannot, possibly, say anything now. In spite of the threat perception, if the former Prime Minister is not interested in having the SPG cover, I would like to understand from him and then take a decision in the matter.

The other part of the question as to the contingency when the former Prime

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri S.S. Ahluwalia.

Minister and his near relatives go abroad is complicated. As far as my information goes, most of the foreign countries provide, allow the SPG cover only to heads of governments and under protocol arrangements to Reads of States. If they are former Prime Ministers, it depends upon their assessment of the threat perception. If they feel that there is a threat to their life, they take care of that. There are countries which allow the security people to come into the country and there are countries which do not allow the security personnel with arms and the kind of immunity which in fact will be expected if they have to carry arms with them is still not covered under their different Acts. So it will depend upon the kind of security required. The hon. Member is asking whether we can prevail upon the foreign countries to provide that kind of security so far as ex-Prime Ministers are concerned. I do not think that any of the foreign countries have agreed to that so far.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Second supplementary.

श्री एस० एस० अहलुवालिया: सभापति महोदय, मेरा सवाल बड़ा सीधा है। मैं जानना चाहता हूं कि जैसा कि आतंकवादी गतिविधियां जो हमारे देश में होती हैं इनके प्रशिक्षण केन्द्र विदेशों में हैं और विदेश में हमारा कोई एक ऐसा व्यक्ति जो हमारे फोर्मर प्राइम मिनिस्टर या प्राइम मिनिस्टर के परिवार के सदस्य हैं जिनका "जैड" कैटेगरी है या उससे भी ऊपर है, थ्रैट परसैप्शन बहुत हाई है और अगर वह विदेश यात्रा में है तो जहां उनके प्रशिक्षण केन्द्र चलते हैं और उन्हीं की ताकतें अगर जुड़ कर वहां पर उनकी हत्या करने की कोशिश करें और हम भारतवासी उनकी सुरक्षा की व्यवस्था यहां से नहीं कर सके तो यह बड़ा दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण होगा। मंत्री महोदय ने कहा कि वह परमिशन करेंगे या नहीं करेंगे, मेरा सवाल है कि आपने कभी कोई कोशिश की है कि किसी विदेशी संस्था से या विदेश मंत्रालय के माध्यम से आप अगर सर्कुलर करें कि हमारे यहां एस०पी०जी० सैक्युरिटी एक्ट के अनुसार हम इन-इन लोगों को एक्स्ट्रा सैक्युरिटी का अरेंजमेंट करते हैं और इनकी व्यवस्था है कि विदेश भ्रमण में जब ये रहेंगे तो उनकी व्यवस्था की जा सकती है, ऐसा कोई पत्राचार हमने किसी विदेशी देश के साथ किया है या नहीं? अगर किया है तो उनका क्या जवाब है?

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN: Sir, about the correspondence with the foreign countries, I won't be able to reply it is for the External Affairs Ministry to reply, but as far as my information goes, the SPG Act is not applicable outside India. The SPG Act is only applicable so far as the Heads of the Government are concerned, and they accept that application. But the foreign countries have their own network of security and they do not accept the kind of cover which we propose to give under the SPG Act. Unless we have some kind of agreements with the respective Governments, I do not think it is going to be possible to provide the SPG cover outside the country. If the agreement is there, then under the agreement we can provide the same but without agreement it depends upon the Government concerned. I have the cases where they have not allowed the security personnel to enter the country. I have the cases where the security personnel were allowed to enter the country but they were not allowed to carry arms with them. And whether the immunity will be available to the SPG personnel is the third point which we have before us because if they have to be effective, unless they have the immunity, they cannot possibly act there.

श्री सुरेश पचौरी: माननीय सभापति जी, मैं अपना पूरक प्रश्न पूछने से पहले मंत्रीजी ने इसी सदन में एस०पी०जी० अमेंडमेंट बिल, 1991 जब प्रस्तुत किया था और उस समय उत्तर में जो कहा था, उससे अपनी बात शुरु करना चाहता हूं। चव्हाण जी ने कहा था कि:

> "A point was also made as to kind of security which has to be provided to Soniaji and her children when they go abroad. I can assure you that we have an understanding with a number of countries. We just inform them and thereafter they take care of the security measures."

माननीय सभापति जी, एस०पी०जी० अमेंडमेंट बिल, 1991 प्रस्तुत करते समय जो कारण और उद्देश्य माननीय मंत्रीजी ने बताए थे उसमें भी उन्होंने यह कहा था कि:

> "Following the assassination of Shri Rajiv Gandhi, Government have received reports, that indicate that several extremist organisations inside and outside India are conspiring to cause harm to the members of his immediate family."

अब माननीय मंत्रीजी यह कह रहे हैं कि एस०पी०जी० अमेंडमेंट बिल, 1991 में ऐसा कोई प्रावधान नहीं है कि पूर्व प्रधान मंत्री और उनके परिवारजनों को जब वह विदेश जाएं तब उन्हें पर्याप्त सुरक्षा एस०पी०जी० जैसी प्रदान की जाए जबकि उस समय उत्तर में उन्होंने इस प्रकार का आश्वासन दिया था। इसी सदन में उन्होंने यह भी आश्वासन दिया था जबकि मैंने यह पूछा था, सभापति जी, मेरे पास उस डिबेट की कापी है। "क्या थ्रेट परसेप्सन को ध्यान में रखते हुए राजीव गांधी जी के परिवारजनों को एस०पी०जी० सुविधा प्रदान करने के लिए बगैर अमेंडमेंट लाए, यह सुविधा 5 साल के बाद भी प्रदान करेंगे।" तो माननीय मंत्रीजी ने 14 दिसम्बर, 1991 को इस प्रकार का आश्वासन इसी सदन में दिया था। मैं आपके माध्यम से माननीय मंत्रीजी से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि विदेशों में जब श्रीमती सोनिया गांधी और उनके परिवारजन यात्रा करें तो आपने इस सदन को दिए गए आश्वासन के तहत क्या वे उन देशों से वार्तालाप करेंगे? अभी तक विदेशों में श्रीमती सोनिया गांधी और उनके परिवारजनों ने जो यात्रा की है और जो उन्हें सुरक्षा प्रदान की गयी है, क्या वे उससे संतुष्ट हैं? अगर संतुष्ट नहीं हैं तो सरकार की तरफ से क्या कार्यवाही की गयी है? सभापति जी, मेरे पूरक प्रश्न का दूसरा भाग यह है कि जैसे इसी सदन में आपने आश्वासन दिया था कि बगैर अमेंडमेंट लाए थ्रेट परसेप्सन को ध्यान में रखते हुए क्योंकि विदेशी आतंकवादी संगठन से श्रीमती सोनिया गांधी और उनके परिवारजनों को खतरा है, आप उन्हें एस०पी०जी० कवर के लिए जो समय-सीमा निर्धारित की गयी है, उसको आगे बढ़ाने का विचार करेंगे? क्या आप अपने उस वक्तव्य से आज भी सहमत हैं? उस पर आप विचार करेंगे या नहीं करेंगे?

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN: Sir, whatever assurance I have given on the floor of the House, the Government stands by it. There is no question of going back. The SPG cover is proposed to be only for a duration of five years after demission of office and that period is going to come to an end by December, 1994. We propose to extend the period and provide the SPG cover even after five years to the family members of our late lamented leader Rajiv Gandhi. But so far as the foreign countries are concerned, I will have to discuss this matter with the External Affairs Ministry. And at least my understanding of the problem is, without specific agreeements with other countries, it will be difficult to extend our Act in the foreign countries.

That is my understanding of the problem. I am still prepared to discuss this issue with the External Affairs Ministry.

SHRI SANATAN BISI: Mr. Chairman, our former Prime Minister, Mr. V.P. Singh, has requested the Government to withdraw the security cover. How much will we save from the exchequer if it is withdrawn?

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN: We have not still withdrawn it. So the question doesn't arise.

SHRI SANATAN BISI: How much is the money spent annually on his security?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Janeshwar Misra.

श्री जनेश्वर मिश्र: सभापति जी, यह हैरत की बात है कि जो कोई भी हम लोगों में से प्रधान मंत्री बन जाता है, आतंकवादी गतिविधियां देश में इतनी व्यापक और बढ़ी है कि उनकी जिंदगी को खतरा आ जाता है, उनके परिवार के लोगों की जिंदगी को खतरा आ जाता है। उनके परिवार के लोगों की जिंदगी को खतरा आ जाता है। केवल प्रधान मंत्री ही नहीं, इस देश में और भी बड़े पुरुष हुए हैं, जो गोली से उड़ाए गए हैं, उनमें महात्मा गांधी का नाम भी लिया जा सकता है, जो राष्ट्रपिता हमारे कहे जाते हैं। हम नहीं जानते कि उनके परिवार की सुरक्षा के लिए किसी जमाने में इस तरह की व्यवस्था की गई थी। अभी अभी गृहमंत्री जी ने कहा है कि एस०पी०जी० का कानून किसी भी देश में लागू नहीं

होता। तो इसमें केवल एक सवाल मैं पूछता हूं कि वर्तमान प्रधान मंत्री जी जब अमरीका गए थे तो क्या यह सच नहीं है कि हमारी एस०पी०जी० वहां व्हाइट हाऊस में सुरक्षा की व्यवस्था की जांच करने गई थी और व्हाइट हाऊस की जो सिक्योरिटि का इंतजाम था उसने उसको वहां जाने से इंकार कर दिया और बैरंग लौटा दिया? क्या इनकी जानकारी है? क्योंकि इन्होंने कहा कि हमारा एस०पी०जी० एक्ट विदेश में कहीं लागू नहीं होता, लेकिन हमारी एस०पी०जी० वर्तमान प्रधान मंत्री की सुरक्षा की दृष्टि से देखने के लिए व्हाइट हाऊस गई थी या नहीं गई थी? और, यदि गई थी तो क्या बैरंग लौटा दी गई थी? इसकी जानकारी हम गृहमंत्री जी से चाहेंगे।

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र: और जो गोरे नहीं थे तो उन लोगों को भी हटा दिया गया था? सिर्फ हमारा यह पूछना है।

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN: Sir, in the first part of my reply, in fact, I have consistently been saying that the foreign countreis accept the position so far as the head of the Government and the head of the State are concerned. So far as the present Prime Minister is concerned, every foreign country will accept this. Of course, it is a fact that our security people have been going there and they have been checking the security arrangements made there. What needs to be done is a matter which has to be discussed among themselves. They see to it that proper security arrangements are made. There is no question of our security people not being allowed by the White House to operate in that area.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Mr. Chairman, I thank the hon. Home Minister for having stated in this House that though the SPG cover which is given to the former Prime Ministers and their family members expires in December, 1994, the Government is willing to extend the same as far as Rajiv Gandhi's family is concerned. However, another problem arises here. As far as the southern part of the country is concerned, the assassins and other persons belonging to the organisation, namely, LTTE, have now started operating in the southern coasts. Now, a situation has arisen that the threat perception varies from Prime Minister to Prime Minsiter because the assassins and other persons who are plotting to kill them and their family members have been operating throughout the country and also outside the country. The hon. Home Minister has said that the SPG cover has not been reviewed. It is not a matter which has to be replied in this House. As far as threat perception is concerned, I would like to know whether he is going to review it from time to time and give more SPG cover to the former Prime Ministers and their family members. Some have got greater threat perception and some have got lesser threat perception. I would like to know on the basis of that whether he will consider to give more SPG cover to the former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's family members or not.

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN: So far as the SPG cover is concerned, whether it is in the South or in the North, the same SPG cover is available. So, there is no question of reviewing the same.

It is the proximate security which the SPG cover provides. It will be their responsibility to see that the scale of security which is prescribed for protection is provided to them and it does not depend upon whether it is in the South or in the North.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Sir, I agree that there is a need to strengthen the SPG. But, I don't think that the SPG alone can give proper and adequate cover to all the prominent personalities who are subjected to security threat. I feel that the ordinary police force should also be properly trained and equipped for this purpose and necessary understanding regarding duty should be given to them. The reason for putting this question is this. I still remember the picture of the dead body of Shri Rajiv Gandhi. His splintered body was lying in a pool of blood and not a single policeman was in sight. All of them ran away. Some of them started taking off their uniform so that they could not be identified. Not

only the policemen but also those who swore in the name of Shri Rajiv Gandhi ran away from the sight, excepting for a very courageous lady, Shrimati Jayanthi Natarajan. I compliment her for her sense of courage and her sense of loyalty to her leader. All of them ran away. If this is the way the security is conducted, I think, not only the SPG but the entire police force should be retrained. A sense of devotion has to be inculcated in them. I remember the scene when Mr. kennedy was murdered in 1963. I saw it on the Television. His bodyguard was on his back seat. He threw himself forward to shield Kennedy. Had one more bullet been fired on Mr. Kennedy, his bodyguard also would have been killed. So, they are supposed to protect the persons whom they guard even at the cost of their own lives. This kind of devotion should be there. I would like to know whether this sense of devotion and loyalty is instilled in the police forces and the SPG without which no amount of training and no amount of armaments which you give them, will help. I would like to know whether this kind of loyalty is being inculcated in the members of the police force and the SPG.

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN: So far as the SPG personnel are concerned, they are given proper training. But, I cannot give the details of the kind of training which is given to them. It will not be in the public interest. It is also not correct that none of the policemen was killed when Shri Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated. There were some police officers who, in fact, were killed along with him. So, this is a matter of record. some police officers who were on the periphery might have run away.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Shrimati Jayanthi Natarajan will tell you about it. All the policemen ran away. All the other people ran away.

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN: I am in full agreement with the hon. Member that Shrimati Jayanthi Natarajan showed courage to be there; others also. There were some friends also who were there. But, to say that the SPG personnel ran away from that place, is not borne out by facts. In fact SPG personnel were not deployed there. The kind of training that the hon. Member has talked about, i.e. devotion to duty and all other aspects, is definitely taken note of. We will try to inculcate the same.

SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN: I am glad to know that adequate security is being given to the Head of the State and also to the Head of the Government. My particular point is this. Our hon. Chief Minister, who is the Head of the Tamil Nadu State, is under a security threat. I understand from the Press that she has been advised not to go abroad because of security perception and threat perception from the LTTE. I would like to know what kind of security arrangements would be made for the Chief Ministers of States when they go abroad. I don't know whether they will also be considered as Heads of State or not. I would like to know whether the Chief Ministers will also be considered for this kind of security.

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN: Sir, I have made my point very clear. Chief Ministers are not heads of State; in our sense, they are heads of the states. But, internationally, what they call state is country. So, head of a country or head of a State or head of a Government only is covered under the SPG. For all others, whether they are Chief Ministers or Ministers, who want to go abroad, they will not be covered under this and they cannot be provided this kind of security.